

14 December 1970

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Intelligence

SUBJECT : Possible Missile Impact Area in Western China

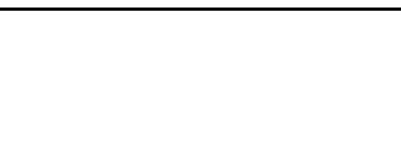
1. I have investigated why the possible missile impact craters and some possible instrumentation sites -- found recently by the Imagery Analysis Service in photography of [] - were not found and reported on earlier by the National Photographic Interpretation Center or other photointerpretation components.

2. I have concluded that it is unlikely that craters such as these -- a key element in the identification of an impact area -- would be perceived in initial scanning of even high resolution photography. The craters are obscure and the possible instrumentation sites ambiguous in their photographic appearance. Such photographic evidences yield to detailed search and lengthy photointerpretation study, unlike the more readily recognizable signatures of launch sites which we are detecting early in their construction and during initial scans and following searches of visible terrain.

3. During initial scanning and following searching (first and second phase photointerpretation) NPIC photointerpreters work against a wide variety of kinds of known targets as well as seeking signs of new activity such as signs of missile deployment and testing. The present arrangement of NPIC photointerpretation assignments continues to be the most effective way in which to detect most kinds of new activities during an initial scan with the number of PIs authorized.

4. Incidentally, NPIC worked with the National Security Agency and COMIREX in gaining coverage of the area in which the craters were found. As the result of information provided by NSA in January 1970, NPIC requested high resolution coverage of a new area different from that which previously had been covered and searched for signs of a missile impact area (see map). NPIC did report in an Oak supplement of July 1970 on the presence of three of the five sites which IAS has described as possible instrumentation sites.

DECLASS REVIEW by NIMA/DOD



Executive Director
National Photographic Interpretation Center

Attachment

Map

Distribution:

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3 - NPIC/IEG

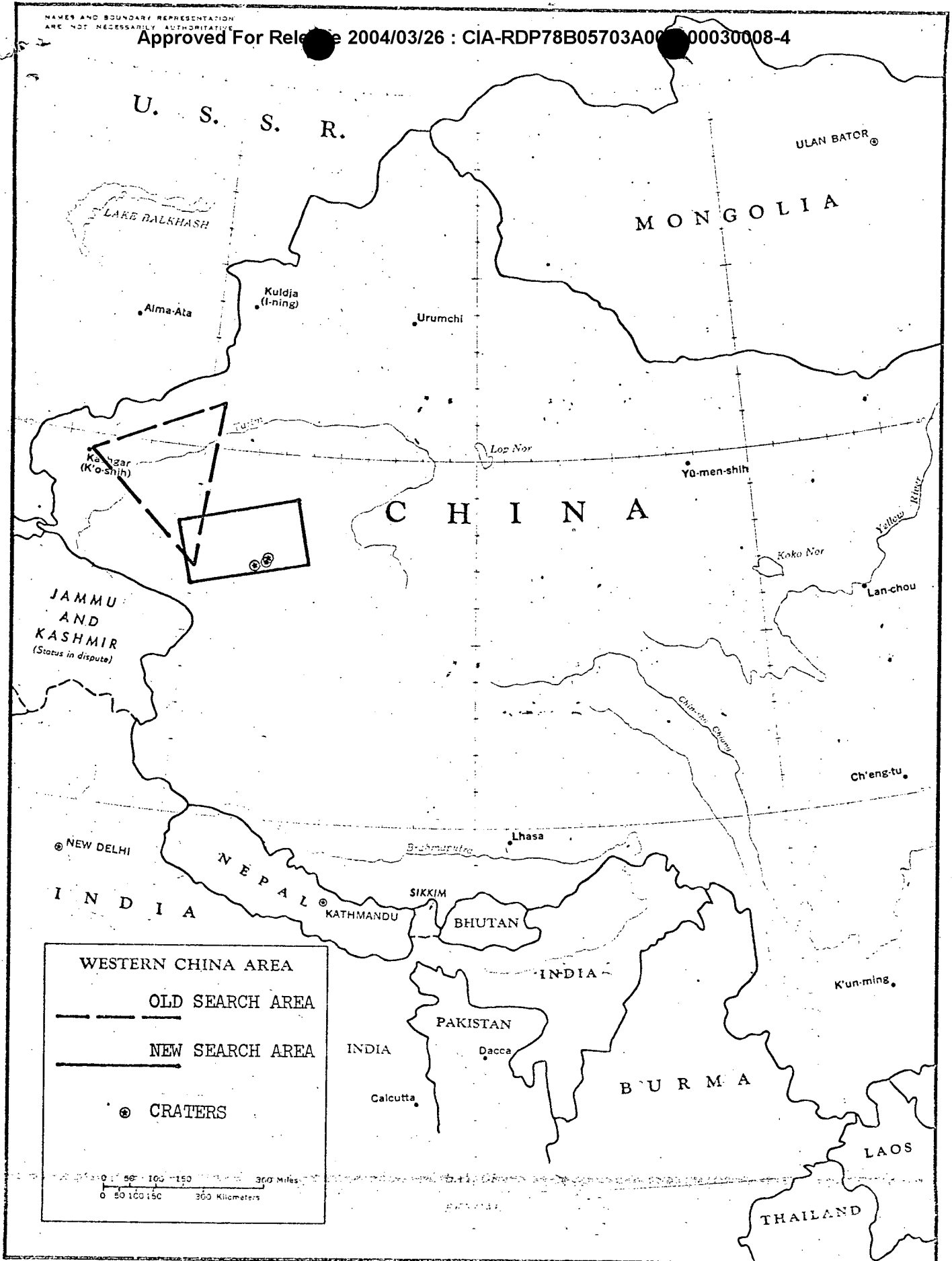
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141 (2 MARCH 1970)

CLASSIFIED MESSAGE

ROUTING

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25X1 ORIG : [REDACTED]
 25X1 UNIT : IAS/MSD
 25X1 EXT : [REDACTED]
 25X1 DATE : 11 DECEMBER 1970

TOP SECRET [REDACTED]

25X1 TO : [REDACTED]
 FROM : CIA/IAS

CONF :

25X1 INFO :

(ALSO [REDACTED])

Handwritten signature/initials

PRECEDENCE		DEFERRED		PRIORITY	INITIALS
	X	ROUTINE		OPERATIONAL IMMEDIATE	INITIALS

25X1 TO [REDACTED] INFO

CITE CIA/IAS- [REDACTED]

25X1 TOP SECRET [REDACTED]

A POSSIBLE MISSILE IMPACT AREA HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED IN THE SOUTH-CENTRAL TAKLA MAKAN DESERT IN WESTERN CHINA.

THREE CRATERS, WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY IMPACTING RE-ENTRY VEHICLES, HAVE BEEN NEWLY IDENTIFIED IN AN AREA APPROXIMATELY 20 NAUTICAL MILES SOUTHEAST OF NIYA (MIN-FENG).

ONE CRATER, LOCATED AT 36-45-40N 83-03-40E, IS ABOUT 75 FEET IN DIAMETER AND WAS FIRST SEEN ON PHOTOGRAPHY OF [REDACTED] IT WAS NOT PRESENT ON [REDACTED] A SECOND CRATER, 0.6 NAUTICAL MILES WEST OF THE FIRST, IS ABOUT 45 FEET IN DIAMETER AND IS LOCATED AT 36-46-10N 83-03-20E. IT WAS FIRST SEEN ON [REDACTED] AND WAS NOT PRESENT ON [REDACTED] THE THIRD CRATER MEASURED APPROXIMATELY 40 FEET IN DIAMETER AND IS LOCATED AT 36-47-40N 82-49-00E, 11 NAUTICAL MILES WEST OF THE FIRST TWO. IT WAS FIRST SEEN ON [REDACTED] AND COULD NOT BE NEGATED UNTIL [REDACTED]

COORDINATING OFFICERS

DEP DIR/IAS
 RELEASING OFFICER

TOP SECRET [REDACTED]

C/IAS/MSD
 AUTHENTICATING OFFICER

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IN ADDITION, FIVE POSSIBLE INSTRUMENTATION SITES AND A BASE SUPPORT FACILITY HAVE ALSO BEEN CONSTRUCTED IN THE SAME GENERAL AREA SINCE

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THEIR LOCATIONS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

POSS. INST. SITE 1 -- 36-44-20N 82-53-20E

POSS. INST. SITE 2 -- 36-53-10N 82-51-40E

POSS. INST. SITE 3 -- 36-56-30N 82-52-20E

POSS. INST. SITE 4 -- 36-57-00N 82-55-20E

POSS. INST. SITE 5 -- 36-56-30N 83-01-30E

NIYA BASE SUPPORT FACILITY -- 37-04N 82-43E

THE LOCATION OF THESE FACILITIES IN RELATION TO THE IMPACT AREA AND THE TIME OF THEIR CONSTRUCTION SUGGESTS A POSSIBLE MISSILE IMPACT AND MONITORING FUNCTION FOR THIS AREA.

THIS POSSIBLE IMPACT AREA IS ABOUT 850 NAUTICAL MILES FROM THE SHUANG-CHENG-TZU RANGEHEAD, 1350 NAUTICAL MILES FROM WU-CHAI AND 2050 NAUTICAL MILES FROM CHING-YU.

PHOTOGRAPHY:

CRATER NO. 1 --

CRATER NO. 2 --

CRATER NO. 3 --

POSS. INST. SITE 1 --

POSS. INST. SITE 2 --

POSS. INST. SITE 3 --

POSS. INST. SITE 4 --

POSS. INST. SITE 5 --

NIYA SUPPORT BASE --

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END OF MESSAGE